

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 OIC-04 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01

TRSE-00 CIEP-02 STR-08 AGR-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAB-01 SAM-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /188 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6361

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LE, UY

SUBJ: URUGUAYAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT LEBANON?

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: MVD 262

1. SUMMARY: THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT FONMIN BLANCO HAD PLANNED TO VISIT LEBANON FOLLOWING HIS PRESENT STAY IN THE US. IT NOW APPEARS THAT HE IS CONSIDERING CANCELLING THE TRIP, PROBABLY BECAUSE LEBANON IS SEEKING SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL AND THE ISRAELIS COULD MIS-READ HIS INTENTIONS.

2. AS FOREIGN MINISTER JUAN BLANCO LEFT FOR THE UNGA, MFN AND ATLANTA OAS MEETINGS, THE LEBANESE CHARGE SAW HIM OFF ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT BLANCO WOULD PROCEED TO LEBANON TO RETURN FONMIN FU'AD NAFFA'S JANUARY VISIT TO URUGUAY (SEE REFTTEL). EL PAIS, ON
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APRIL 17, PUBLISHED A REPORT FROM ONE OF ITS REPORTERS

WHO IS COVERING BLANCO'S TRIP TO THE US INDICATING THAT THE MINISTER WOULD GO TO LEBANON THE WEEKEND OF APRIL 21. A DAY LATER EL DIA SAID A HIGH GOU OFFICIAL HAD CONFIRMED THE TRIP.

3. THE EL PAIS ARTICLE QUOTED BLANCO AS HAVING SAID HE WAS RETURNING THE NAFFA VISIT. BLANCO MADE NO COMMENT ON A SUPPOSED LEBANESE OFFER, MADE IN JANUARY, TO ESTABLISH A FREE ZONE AND STORAGE FACILITIES FOR URUGUAYAN BEEF IN URUGUAY.

4. AN EMBOFF WAS TOLD BY FONOFF POLICY DIRECTOR BARREIRO ON APRIL 17 (AND BY FONOFF DIRGEN SAMPEDRO AND THE OFFICE OF PROTOCOL ON APRIL 18) THAT BLANCO DEFINITELY WOULD NOT TRAVEL TO BEIRUT THIS WEEKEND AND THAT THE TRIP MIGHT BE CANCELLED. BARREIRO EXPLAINED THAT THE TIMING WAS POOR, GIVEN THE MID-EAST SITUATION IN GENERAL AND THE LEBANESE REQUEST FOR UN SANCTIONS AGAINST ISRAEL (WITH WHICH THE GOU HAS LONG HAD CLOSE RELATIONS) IN PARTICULAR.

5. COMMENTT: ANOTHER DETERRENT TO SUCH A TRIP IS THE GOU'S DESIRE TO ELIMINATE NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL COSTS. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE THE MINISTER'S CURRENT THINKING FROM HERE. WEIGHING MOST HEAVILY IN HIS DECISION WILL BE HIS ESTIMATE AS TO WHETHER HE CAN GAIN ENOUGH IN LEBANON TO OFFSET POSSIBLE ISRAELI PIQUE AT HIS VISITING BEIRUT AT THIS MOMENT.
SIRACUSA

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